

THE LOMOND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB JOURNAL.



No. 6.

SEPTEMBER, 1945.

EDITORIAL:

We are glad rather than apologetic that this number of the Journal is overdue since it marks our Number One peace-time effort. Now is the time we have waited for so long, the time when we can turn again to the peace of the hills, knowing there are endless week-ends before us and not just moments of sanity snatched from the chaos of war-time living. The Journal, we trust, has fulfilled a genuine need - wafted a breath of mountain air - to those who have been unable to visit the hills and we hope it will continue to do so.

Will members please note that the Monthly Meetings will be held at the Club Rooms on the first Wednesday of every month. The Secretary will notify members of any alteration

All notices should be sent as early as possible to H.W. Grant, 12, Clincart Road, Glasgow, S.2.

CLUB NOTES: B.M.C.

Since the last issue of the journal the Club has affiliated to the British Mountaineering Council.

Briefly, the aims of the B.M.C. are to form a central organisation to speak in the name of all mountaineers in this country on matters affecting the sport and to utilise the collective experience of all the clubs in furthering the art of mountaineering.

Among its projects of interest to Scottish Climbers is the intention of providing First-Aid kits at such centres as Arrochar, Crianlarich, Sligachan, Aviemore, Kinlochewe, etc.

Mr. R. Chalmers goes forward as our delegate in London.

NEW MEMBERS:

We take this opportunity of welcoming to the Club Mrs. M. Slack and Mrs. J. Hutcheson, both of whom are already well known to Club members.

PIONEERING ROUTES:

The pioneering of a difficult route is, I believe, the best experience in rock-climbing. To climb any established route, especially a difficult one, is always a source of satisfaction, and to climb it in conditions not prescribed for it, such as wind, snow or ice, is even more satisfying, but neither can match the deep satisfaction one feels on a first ascent when all difficulties are over and only easy rocks lie ahead.

At such a time one knows the feelings of the early climbers when the opportunities seemed endless. Indeed, as opportunities become fewer it is more likely that these feelings are intensified whether the route is on the South Face of the Matterhorn or on a few hundred feet of one's native crags. To climb where no one has gone before is always fascinating.

At the present time, however, it seems to be the custom to open an guide-book, select carefully a detailed route and follow the instructions as one might follow a recipe. The guide-book symbolises the "Leader", the muscle and resolution of the climber making up the "rest of the party", as it were. From experience I know that this combination is admirable, but isn't there something missing? Some necessary element known only to the pioneer?

Shouldn't the ideal climber's guide emphasise the "possibilities" and let the established routes rest upon their cairns and well-trodden ways? There are still considerable areas of unclimbed crags in Scotland which will be explored sooner or later, but why doesn't the guide-book give them some attention?

I have memories of crags climbed as yet only in imagination, and of others vainly attempted and quitted only with unquenched ambition. I remember a wall of clean, steep rock above Lost Glen, and that great wall to the west of Ossian's cave, and a steep rib which sweeps up from the Castle Corrie of Carn Dearg and I recall the promises graven on remote rock-faces in Ross and Sutherland.

This does not exhaust the "possibilities"; in fact, I haven't even mentioned the most interesting ones, but when it comes to details I find it very difficult to conform practice with principle. There is a natural inclination to keep one's hopes and aspirations under one's hat, and the more I think of it as I ramble on, the more I am inclined to agree with the guide-book's attitude to "possibilities". I am even prepared to qualify it further by suggesting that the first principle should be - "go and find your own crags!"

At the same time I emphasise my first point regarding the great merits of pioneering, and I leave it as a "possibility" worth considering by anyone who may be seeking that extra ingredient not contained in the guide-book recipe.

J.B. NIMLIN.

RHUA DUNAIN, SKYE.

Rhua Dunain is the eastern termination of Loch Brittle about six miles from Glen Brittle House. There is charm in its loneliness much to be appreciated in the views of the Cuillins and Rhum and a great deal of interest in the ruins.

These ruins are of three distinct eras bound only by association with the point and the Lochain behind it. The latest ruins, probably last occupied in the middle of the nineteenth century, consist of a scattered sheiling with one large two storied house occupying a prominent position. According to the Soay islanders the people were antagonistic to strangers and progress and would undoubtedly have actively resented the present day climber.

The point takes its name from the remains of a fort on the edge of a sea cliff. Iberian sea wanderers built this fort as an outpost some 2,000 years ago. They came through the Western Isles on their way to Scandinavia in search of ambergris which was of great value and was attributed with magic properties.

To the side of the fort there is a natural fault in the rock which runs from the sea to a lochain about one hundred yards inland. This fault has been exploited by building up the sides with massive stone blocks, thus forming a canal which at high tide would take boats of shallow draught into the lochain. As there is no anchorage within miles of the point it may be assumed that this canal was built by the Iberians.

At the North end of the lochain there are two caves lined with stone blocks and entered by a hole in the ground. These are considered to have been a Prehistoric iron foundry, and from traces of slag and melting arrangements it is thought the technique was of an advanced nature.

P.L. McGEACH.

THE FIRST BUS RUN.

During the war years the Lomond Bus has been, for many of us, symbolic of peace and freedom from travel restrictions. It is, therefore appropriate that the first bus run since 1941 should have coincided with a week-end buzzing with rumours of the coming peace.

On August 11th we were once again assembled at Clydeside. Four years had elapsed since we last met there, but apparently, we had not changed much. Perhaps our climbing gear looked a little the worse for wear, our boots clumsier with their British Clinkers and even the bus, a rather shabby substitute for our luxury pre-war model. But these things mattered little. Our real concern was for the spirit of the Club, that spirit of comradeship which had transformed the bus runs of 1939 into communal adventures to the hills. Had it survived?

The/

The long awaited approach of peace inevitably led to comparison with that memorable run to Glencoe on September 2nd, 1939. We recalled old friends who had been with us then. A few we hope to welcome back soon, many would never share our week-ends again.

As we luxuriated in the comfort of easy travel the miles slipped past. Loch Lomond lay before us looking her loveliest for the occasion. Soon the Loch was behind us. A welcome stop for refreshments at Crianlarich, the inevitable thrill of turning into the Glencoe road at Tyndrum, and we were on the "home stretch". At the Glen Etive road we tumbled out and there was the Buachaille in all its majesty. We had arrived!

Hopes were high for a large camp-fire and sing-song as we hastened across the moor to the old camp-site by the river. Alas, the midges had other plans. Rationed for four years to an occasional climber, they descended voraciously on the banquet we presented. Defensive tactics were adopted and soon each unit had its own smoking fire of heather and grass. Presently the site was engulfed in billows of smoke amidst which we fumbled with streaming eyes to erect our tents. Wheezing and choking, we cooked a scrap of supper before retreating to the comparative haven of the tents

Awakening to a dream day of cloudless skies, we did not tarry at the camp site. The Moor was dotted with figures, most of us on our way to renew acquaintance with the Crowberry. It was a day for leisurely climbing and sunning on ledges and we didn't mind queuing to go round Abraham's or Greig's. The opportunities thus afforded for a smoke and a "blather" were not overlooked. Crowberry Tower was hardly adequate for the crowd which collected there and as we chatted we felt that the "good old days" had indeed come back. A few enthusiasts carried on to the summit, the rest quickly descending the Curved Ridge to the cool balm of the river pool. Here was the climax of a perfect day, a day recaptured from the past, the sum of our hopes for four years.

Many of us had planned to stay a few days more if peace was announced but we were to be disappointed. Those of us who had been in Glencoe when war was declared felt that this was the place to celebrate peace. Regretfully then, we left for home still vainly hoping for news that we could stay. The bus must have sensed our feelings for she baulked at the hill before Crianlarich. After some persuasion on the part of the driver, and to the disappointment of some of the occupants she started off, carrying us triumphantly home on top gear.

F.G.

LOCHABER MOUNTAINEERING CLUB.

Owing to the number of unfortunate accidents which occurred on and around Ben Nevis during the latter part of 1944, it was felt that some sort of Local Rescue Party should be formed. A few experienced climbers together with others who were interested held a meeting and after discussion, decided that the formation of a mountaineering/

club was the best solution of the problem as it would enable those interested to keep in touch with one another and to be at hand in case of accidents. The club was named "Lochaber Mountaineering Club", the membership consisting of six experienced climbers and an equal number of others who were used to hill work but had no experience of rock or snow climbing and were keen to learn. Apart from these members a list was made of volunteers who would help search-parties etc. if required.

Ideas under discussion by the members include the rebuilding of part of the Glen Nevis Observatory as an emergency hut and the opening of an Information Bureau in Fort William where reports on weather, snow conditions etc. can be handed in by climbers coming off the Ben and thus make the information more readily available for other climbers.

JAS WYNE.

MOUNTAINEERING ACCIDENTS.

July 3rd, 1945. D.G. Martin (19) was crushed by a boulder on the slopes of Sgurr Dearg near the Window Buttress. He suffered severe internal injuries and died on the stretcher on the way down to Glen Brittle Hostel. The party was not roped and not in any dangerous situation. Martin was a member of Edinburgh University Mountaineering Club.

July 17th, 1945. A Polish climber was killed while climbing with an English companion on Sgurr Thearlach. He had been struck by a dislodged stone while ascending the ridge above the Thearlach Dubh Gap. There was a high wind blowing and the climbers were unroped.

A party of club members located the body a few hours later on the screes in Coire an Lochan. Due to the lateness of the hour and the difficulty of the terrain nothing further could be done except to bring back his personal effects and prepare for a stretcher party next day. In spite of the large number of climbers in Glen Brittle nineteen men could only be mustered on the following day to bring the body down Coire a Ghrunnda to Glen Brittle House. The route down the corrie is very rough and, in consequence a heavy strain was put on the small party.

WEEK-ENDS ETC.

CUMBERLAND.

W. Gordon and T. McGuinness snatched a few days in April to climb in the Lake District. The difficulties of travel were overcome in the time honoured manner and although changes were frequent the journey was finally accomplished.

Together with some of the Fell and Rock C.C. they climbed Kern Knotts Crack and Chimney, following up with the ascent of the Eastern Buttress. Toppet Bastion was also climbed and is recommended as an excellent route. They rounded off the day by descending the Needle Arete and climbing the Needle before hurrying back to Seathwaite.

On the following day, after two hours steady slogging, the party reached the foot of Moss Gyll on Scafell. The Gully which was in a dry condition was climbed in approximately three hours. Descending by the Broad Stand, the party hastened back to the farm to do full justice to a good dinner from Mrs. Edmiston.

Next day was spent exercising their thumbs on the way back to Glasgow.

W.G.

BEN A'AN.

This was the first regular meet the Club had held for some time mainly because of transport difficulties.

Those members fortunate enough to be up early on the Saturday enjoyed a glorious evening's climbing and among them scaled practically all the known climbs on that miniature mountain. Later the entire party gathered round a grand camp fire and, stimulated by the glow, solved many a weighty problem.

The weather broke during the night and a cold drizzle of rain made the rocks most uninviting next day. In spite of this however, a certain amount of climbing was done but most members left the hill early to face the slog to Aberfoyle. The cold drizzle of the morning having gained its second wind, the members arrived for the bus in a pretty sodden condition.

Members Present: J. Harvey, A. Hutchison, J. & R. Hutchison, A. Kay, M. and A. Slack, F. and H. Grant, T. McKee, P. McGeoch, D. McGovern, W. Russell, R. Young and J. Stevenson.

GARBH BHEINN.

Encouraged by a previous article in the Journal H. Grant and W. Gordon spent the week-end of 5th and 6th May in Glen Iubhair. On Sunday the weather was unpromising, but an occasional glimpse of the Craggs was sufficient inducement to cause the members to leave their tent to carry out their original plan of having a good look at the Great Gully.

To avoid a soaking, the first big cave pitch was turned on the right by way of a steep, grassy gully. The angle of this gully is most deceptive but the abundant plant life supplies a large, if unsatisfactory, variety of handgrips. The main gully was regained and climbed as far as the "great unclimbed pitch". Little time was spent contemplating its sheer walls and massive overhanging roof and the party crossed to the Great Ridge. This ridge affords a bewildering number of holds and the climbers had the unusual experience of choosing only the cleanest to ascend this climb.

The descent was made by the N.E. Buttress to the Bealach. The Buttress/

Buttress has much to offer and with the rest of the mountain would seem worthy of closer attention. The rocks of Bhein Bheag, although not as impressive as Garbh Bhein, should not be overlooked.

It is worth noting that the last decent camp site up Glen Iubhair adequate enough to hold a few tents is just above the great slabs in the burn on the right bank ascending. Above this point the ground is either too rough or too boggy although occasional spots big enough for one small tent are to be found.

H.W.G.

CRUACHAN:

J. Harvey spent the King's Birthday week-end in the Cruachan district. Choosing a different approach from the usual one, he took the train to Taynuilt Station and walked round to the River Awe where it joins Loch Etive. For a hard-earned tuppence the ferryman took them across the river and they found an excellent camp-site with plenty of timber further up the loch.

The north face of Cruachan from this angle presents a fine array of chimneys and gullies. Much of the rock face is slabby but the angle is fairly easy and in winter conditions this side should give excellent sport.

J.H.

THE COBBLER.

June 9th.

Saturday June 9th marked the occasion of an annual "meet". Following Bill Russell's lecture to the 15th Glasgow Rover Scouts it was suggested that club members should introduce a party of scouts to the joys of climbing. As a result, a company of about thirty members and rovers climbed to the camp spot by the Narnain Boulder. At times the scene was reminiscent of the pack-laden procession through the Chilcoat Pass in Chaplin's "Gold Rush". With the addition of another twenty-odd "regular" visitors, the Stone probably saw its greatest throng to date. A noisy mob milled around the practice routes, scoring the ancient face of the Stone and churning up the surrounding bogs. The sound of "skliffing" and "peching" went on into the night.

This gusty showery night was followed by a perfect climbing day of wide views and bright sunshine. Once again the procession took to the track, and headed for the South Peak of the Cobbler. After a little queuing, the parties spaced out and festooned the skyline from "Jean" to the summit block. Such representative features as "Dead Man's Corner", "The Amplifier" and the "Needle Arête" were chosen as the best introduction to the crags. Here one might pay tribute to the conscientious spirit of the members who never once forsook the "straight" and "Moderate" path of duty for more adventurous routes.

The day finished with a leisurely contemplation of the serried Bens, a dash down to camp for a hurried meal, and the inevitable cross-country/

country dash for the Loch Lomond Steamer.

Members present - Mr. and Mrs. A. Slack, A. Kay, P. McGeoch, C. Finlayson, J. Bell, T. McKee, Mr. and Mrs. Nimlin, R. Young, J. Harvey, W. Russell and J. Stevenson.

J.B.N.

AUGUST MEET, GLEN COE.

This meet was excellently attended the following members (twenty three in all) being present - J. Bell, S. Drysdale, D. Easson, C. Finlayson, J. Harvey, A. Hutchison, J. Hutton, A. Kay, P. McGeoch, T. McKee, J. Shanks, J. Stevenson, R. Young, F & H. Grant, M. & J. Haining, J. and R. Hutchison, J. & J. Nimlin and M. and A. Slack.

A remarkably prompt start was made on Sunday - a day of brilliant sunshine.

Stevenson, Young, Nimlin, McGeoch, Easson, McKee, Hutchison, F. Grant and M. Haining ascended Crowberry Ridge direct by Abraham's Ledge, Kay and Harvey and Mrs. Nimlin by Greig's. Grant and Haining climbed Agagg's and a couple of routes on the Crowberry Tower. Drysdale and Hutton enjoyed a most leisurely scramble up the Curved Ridge. The Slacks started on the Central Buttress but changed to Collie's Climb.

Further down the Glen, the Hutchisons and J. Shanks were on the Aonach Eagach while C. Finlayson and a friend ascended Bidean nam Bian by the Church Door from a camp in the "Lost Glen."

H.W.G.

SKYE, 1945.

This year's holiday in Skye produced no great feats of cragman-ship. The fatality already indcribed in the Journal was a disturbing influence, quite apart from any change of programme it entailed. As several club members were engaged in the recovery of the body, it is reasonable to assume that the fine edge of enthusiasm was dulled by the experience. Furthermore, the summer holidays of 1945 found people rather more jaded than usual and more than ever disposed to take the word "holiday" in its literal sense. In consequence, climbing days were usually sandwiched between days of sunbathing and beachcombing, and for one party at least, the real highlight of the holiday was a motor-boat voyage from Mallaig to Loch Brittle in a heavy swell.

But for most climbers, the normal incidents of a Cuillin day were ample reward. There were days when the mist drove endlessly over the broken ridges and no handhold looked too capacious to be ignored. Days when/

when the mist cleared momentarily to reveal the ever dramatic scene of stark pinnacles linked by narrow crescents of splintered rock. Days when the mist glowed and grudgingly retreated from a sunlit world of mountain and sea. They were the Cuillins - to be among them was enough.

Parties climbed on the Window Buttress, Inaccessable Pinnacle, Coire Laggan and Coire Ghrundda faces of Ciche a Sgumain, Bhastair Tooth etc and covered most of the Main Ridge between the Dubhs and Sgurr nan Gillean.

Members present - H. and F. Grant, J. and M. Haining, J. and J. Nimlin (and Dorothy) T. McKee, W. Gordon, J. Stevenson, D. Easson, A.&M. Slack, J. Harvey, A. Kay, A. Hutcheson, W. Russell and R. Young.

J.B.N.

While on the subject of Skye, it is fitting that we should pay tribute to the architectural abilities of B.H. Humble and T. Mitchell who spent several hours constructing a Shelter Stone in Coire Laggan.

It lies below the crags of Sgumain and is well protected from the west wind. That little Dorothy Nimlin should enjoy three or or four hours unbroken sleep in it is a recommendation in itself. In settled weather it will provide an excellent bivouac.

We are greatly honoured that the architects should dedicate their work to the club and name it "Lomond View".

H.W.G.

NEW CLIMBS.

Buachaille Etive. Crowberry Tower - East Face.

Route 1. 140 ft. approx. Severe and Strenuous.

Start - Cairn, a few yards to right of East Chimney.

Climb obliquely left for a few feet then straight up over steep rocks to a good belay at the top of the first section of the east Chimney. Carry on directly up the corner and finish approximately at the top of the S.E. Ridge.

The first 30 ft of this climb are strenuous and the rock not too sound in places.

Route 2. 130 ft. approx. Moderately difficult.

Start/

Start - Cairn, a few yards further to right of Route 1 and at the highest point of the shallow gully.

Climb straight up for some 30 ft to a good stance and belay. Follow up the Shallow scoop directly above, finishing a few feet below the summit of the Tower.

Both routes are easily reached from the Crowberry Ridge and proved much more interesting than the ascent by the ordinary routes.

H.W. GRANT and J. HAINING,
August, 12th, 1945.

OBITUARY:

It is our painful task to announce the death of another club member, Alex. Bulloch, as the result of a motor accident in Italy.

Alex was a keen mountaineer carrying his enthusiasm for the hills with him to Africa and Italy. Indeed just before his untimely death we were awaiting an article from him on the expeditions mentioned in No. 3 copy of the Journal. He will be greatly missed by all of us who know his friendship.
